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Rural District Council.

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ANNUAL REPORT

.....OF THE.....

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

FOR THE YEAR 1938.

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CROOK :

T. LINTON (WM. WALTON), PRINTER, CHURCH STREET.

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# WEARDALE RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

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## Report of Medical Officer of Health for 1938.

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To the Chairman and Members of the Weardale  
Rural District Council.

GENTLEMEN,

I herewith submit to you my Report for the year 1938.

### **SECTION A.**

#### **Statistic and Social Conditions.**

##### **NATURAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS.**

The area of the District is 99,562 acres.

The Registrar-General's estimate of the population at the middle of 1938 is 9,069, and on this figure our statistics have to be based. The population at the 1931 census was 10,714, and though there has been, undoubtedly, diminution since then, I do not think that there are now 1,645 less people in the District than in 1931.

The inhabited houses at the end of the year numbered 3,449 according to the Rate Books.

The rateable value of the District and the sum represented by a penny rate were £45,305 and £175.36, respectively.

Weardale is a hilly and sparsely populated area amongst the eastern spurs of the Pennines, and by far the larger part of it is barren moorland of use only for sheep and grouse. Some of the moorland is utilised as catchment areas for water supplies by the Durham County Water Board. Pastoral farming is the main industry, there being but very little arable land, and that being practically all in the eastern and least elevated part of the area. After farming, the limestone quarries about Stanhope and Frosterley, and the Steelworks at Wolsingham, employ the bulk of the male population. Lead and spar mining, which formerly gave employment to the majority of the men in upper Weardale and Rookhope, have been in a most depressed state during the year, owing to the prevailing low price of the metal. Whinstone and gannister quarrying, which used to employ a considerable number of men in the dale, have both been very slack throughout the year. The steady increase of mechanization in the limestone quarries,



to which I referred last year, continues to reduce the number of men employed for a given output, and there are consequently now practically no men employed in the Stanhope and Frosterley quarries from upper Weardale. For these reasons upper Weardale has been badly hit, industrially, throughout the year, and there has been in consequence, amongst the younger men, a regrettable amount of migration to the distant industrial areas. At the eastern extremity of the area the partial reopening of colliery workings at West Thornley and Elm Park has reduced the unemployment in that part of the District.

## Vital Statistics.

### BIRTHS.—LIVE BIRTHS.

The total number of births registered during the year was 142.

			Male.	Female.
Legitimate	...	...	76	60
Illegitimate	...	...	4	2
			—	—
		Total	80	62

### STILL BIRTHS.—These numbered 3.

			Male.	Female.
Legitimate	...	...	0	3
Illegitimate	...	...	0	0
			—	—
		Total	0	3

On the basis of an estimated population of 9,069, these figures give a live birth-rate of 15·6 per 1,000 population, and a total birth-rate (live and still) of 15·9 per 1,000 population. This compares quiet favourably with the birth-rate for the whole of England and Wales for the same period, which was 15·1 per 1,000.

The still births show a still birth-rate of 0·33 per 1,000 population, the rate for the whole of England and Wales being 0·60 per 1,000.

### DEATHS.—These numbered 128.

Males	...	...	59
Females	...	...	69
			—
		Total	128

This figure is equivalent to a death-rate of 14·1 per 1,000 population, which compares unfavourably with a death-rate of 11·6 per 1,000 for the whole of England and Wales.

### MATERNAL DEATHS.

There were no deaths from puerperal sepsis or other puerperal causes, so that the maternal mortality rate for the District was nil. The maternal mortality rate for the whole of England and Wales was 2·97 per 1,000 births.

### INFANTILE DEATHS.

These amounted to 7 (children under 1 year of age), all being legitimate. This gives an infantile mortality rate of 49 per 1,000 births. The rate for the whole of England and Wales was 53 per 1,000 births.

Deaths from Cancer (all ages)	...	...	17
-------------------------------	-----	-----	----

Cancer death-rate 2·4 per 1,000 population.

Deaths from Measles (all ages)	...	...	0
--------------------------------	-----	-----	---

Deaths from Whooping Cough (all ages)...	0
--	---

Deaths from Diarrhoea (under 2 years)	...	0
---------------------------------------	-----	---

I see nothing worthy of special comment in regard to sickness or invalidity or environmental conditions during the year, and I do not consider that the health or physique of either children or adults have been materially affected by unemployment.

CAUSES OF DEATH.				Males.	Females.
All Causes				59	69
1	Typhoid and Paratyphoid fever			0	0
2	Measles			0	0
3	Scarlet Fever			0	0
4	Whooping Cough			0	0
5	Diphtheria			0	0
6	Influenza			0	0
7	Encephalitis lethargica			0	0
8	Cerebro-spinal fever			0	0
9	Tuberculosis of respiratory system			3	3
10	Other tubercular diseases			2	1
11	Syphilis			0	0
12	General paralysis of insane, tabes, etc.			0	0
13	Cancer			5	17
14	Diabetes			0	1
15	Cerebral hæmorrhage, etc.			6	7
16	Heart disease			21	21
17	Aneurysm			0	0
18	Other circulatory diseases			5	2
19	Bronchitis			0	0
20	Pneumonia (all forms)			2	2
21	Other respiratory diseases			0	0
22	Peptic ulcer			0	0
23	Diarrhœa (under 2 years)			0	0
24	Appendicitis			1	0
25	Cirrhosis of liver			0	0
26	Other diseases of liver			0	1
27	Other digestive diseases			2	0
28	Acute and chronic nephritis			0	0
29	Puerperal sepsis			0	0
30	Other puerperal diseases			0	0
31	Congenital debility, premature birth, etc.			2	2
32	Senility			0	1
33	Suicide			1	0
34	Other violence			4	1
35	Other defined diseases			4	7
36	Ill-defined diseases...			1	3
37	Diarrhœa (over two years)			0	0
38	Small-pox			0	0
39	Poliomyelitis			0	0
40	Polio-encephalitis			0	0
Total				59	69



Appended are the birth-rates and death-rates for the preceding seven years :—

	Birth-rate per 1,000 population.	Death-rate per 1,000 population.
1931	13·8	14·6
1932	15·5	14·4
1933	17·1	12·8
1934	14·4	12·9
1935	15·4	13·1
1936	13·6	15·1
1937	14·5	14·1
1938	15·6	14·1

## SECTION B.

### General Provision of Health Services.

#### PUBLIC HEALTH STAFF.

##### (a) MEDICAL.

Medical Officer of Health (part time) :

JAMES BANNERMAN, M.B. (EDIN.)

Tuberculosis Medical Officer

Venereal Diseases Medical Officer

School Medical Officer

Maternity and Child Welfare Medical Officer

Obstetric Consultants

} Under  
Durham County  
Council.

##### (b) OTHERS.

Sanitary Inspector : JAS. R. RIDLEY, Cert. R.S.I., Lond.

Veterinary Surgeon

Public Analyst

Health Visitor

} Under Durham County Council.

#### LABORATORY FACILITIES.

Examinations of sputum, throat swabs and blood, for the diagnosis of tuberculosis, diphtheria and typhoid fever, respectively, as well as other investigations when considered necessary, are carried out at the College of Medicine, Newcastle-on-Tyne, for all practitioners in the area, at the expense of the Durham County Council. During the year 52 such examinations were carried out and the results transmitted to me.

## AMBULANCE FACILITIES.

The District is served by the motor ambulance of the Weardale Ambulance Association, which is stationed at St. John's Chapel. This Association is entirely voluntary, and is carried on by a subscription of 4/- per household per annum, which entitles each subscriber to have the use of the ambulance four times in the year, provided that the doctor in attendance deems it necessary.

The workmen in the quarries have, through their trade union organization, the service of a motor ambulance from Tow Law for stretcher cases, and car transport or bus fare for less serious cases.

The District can be now said to be reasonably well supplied with ambulance facilities.

## NURSING IN THE HOME.

The whole of the District is served by District Nurses, with the exception of the sparsely populated northern fringe about Hunstanworth. These nurses are all under the auspices of the Durham County Nursing Association, are subsidized by this body, and are all certified Midwives, except in the case of the Stanhope Nursing Association, whose nurse is not maternity trained. This has caused some difficulty in regard to the provision of midwifery and maternity service for the Stanhope neighbourhood under the Midwives' Act, 1936, but this difficulty has been largely overcome by an arrangement whereby the Frosterley nurse, who is maternity trained, is available, for cases in the area served by the Stanhope Nursing Association. The latter has a long and creditable history as an entirely voluntary organization, not receiving any financial assistance from the County as do the other Nursing Associations in the area. The Stanhope Nursing Association felt that it would have been very unfair to dismiss their excellent nurse because she happened to be not maternity trained.

## TREATMENT CENTRES AND CLINICS.

Maternity and Child Welfare Centres are in operation at Wolsingham, Stanhope and St. John's Chapel. There is a Tuberculosis Clinic at Bishop Auckland, and a Venereal Diseases Clinic at Durham. These are all under County Council control.

## HOSPITALS.

This wide area is quite devoid of any general hospital accommodation, and cases for operation, treatment, or investigation are practically all removed to the Newcastle Royal Victoria Infirmary, a distance of thirty miles or more. A centrally situated small cottage hospital would be a priceless boon to the community.



## SECTION C.

### Sanitary Circumstances of Area.

#### WATER SUPPLIES.

Wolsingham and Elm Park Terrace are supplied by the Durham County Water Board with water from the Burnhope, Waskerley and Tunstall Reservoirs. All the other villages are provided for by local supplies (some fifteen in number) under the control of this Council. These supplies are all of good quality for drinking purposes and are, for the most part, soft in character.

During the year certain improvements to existing supplies have been effected. For the Westgate and Daddryshields supply, 200 yards of new asbestos-concrete pipes were laid down on Swinhope Moor, and at the Crawleyside supply 435 yards of similar piping were laid on the moor from the springhead to the storage chamber.

Three samples of water were sent away for analysis, and all were found to be satisfactory.

#### DRAINAGE AND SEWERAGE.

The various sewerage schemes of the District, in all of which land filtration is the method employed, have functioned satisfactorily throughout the year, with the possible exception of that at Stanhope, which is obviously insufficient to deal adequately with the sewage from that village. Plans have been formulated for enlarging this filtration area and so making it a more satisfactory proposition.

Negotiations have been in progress for acquiring suitable land for similar sewage disposal schemes for Eastgate and Thornley and for Hill End and Bridge End, Frosterley.

#### RIVER POLLUTION.

In July a complaint was received from the Auckland District Council regarding pollution of Waskerley Burn at Wolsingham, by the throwing in of refuse. We had new warning notices erected. My suggestion of closing the access to the stream at the gateway in Silver Street was not practicable, as there is apparently a public right of way there.

We hope that now with the provision of public scavenging for the up-dale villages, there will be less of this objectionable pollution of streams by the throwing in of household refuse.

#### CLOSET ACCOMMODATION.

During the year 35 privies and ash-closets were converted into W.Cs. The closet conveniences in the District number 1,033 W.Cs., 226 ash-closet and 371 privies.

## PUBLIC CLEANSING.

Suitable land was acquired for the depositing of refuse at Frosterley, Stanhope and Cowshill. All the villages in the Parish of Stanhope have now got a system of public scavenging. Arrangements are also being made for this at Thornley and Harperley. There have been complaints from householders in this latter neighbourhood about the lack of public scavenging, and it is hoped that during the current year this needed improvement will be in operation. As a result of the recent re-arrangement of county areas, certain householders round about Harperley, who were formerly in the Auckland Rural District became residents in the Weardale Rural District, and thereby lost the advantage of public scavenging which they had enjoyed in the Auckland area.

## SANITARY INSPECTION OF AREA.

The work done by the Sanitary Inspector's department is tabulated herewith :—

	Informal Written Notice by Inspector	Formal Notice by Authority	Nuisances Abated after Notice
Dwelling Houses—Foul Conditions and Structural Defects ... ..	58		58
Dairies and Milk Shops ... ..	18		18
Cowsheds... ..	79		79
Slaughter-houses ... ..	1		1
Ashpits and Privies .. ..	37		37
Refuse and Manure Deposits ... ..	2		2
Water-closets ... ..	16		16
Defective Yard Paving ... ..	3		3
Drainage—Defects ... ..	34		34
Water Supplies ... ..	69		69
Other Nuisances ... ..	1		1
Totals ... ..	318		318

## SHOPS.

No action was necessary under the Shops Act, 1934.

## CAMPING SITES.

There are two licensed camping sites in the District, one at West Blackdene and the other at Edmundbyers. Here and there, during the summer months odd campers put up their temporary abodes. I am not aware of any nuisance caused by these few campers.



**SMOKE ABATEMENT.**

No action was necessary.

**ERADICATION OF BED BUGS.**

No action was necessary.

**HOUSE DISINFECTION.**

This was carried out at 123 houses where there had been infectious disease.

**SCHOOLS.**

These may be considered as generally satisfactory, and children have not to travel any unduly long distances to school. At some of the schools the sanitary conveniences might with advantage be improved. One school was fumigated by the Sanitary Inspector during the year.

**FACTORIES.**

There are none in the area.

**SECTION D.****Housing.**

I have during the year, with your Inspector, re-inspected and reported on to you the unfit houses at Rookhope, Eastgate, Stanhope, Frosterley and Wolsingham.

There were 9 new houses erected during the year :—

Wolsingham	...	...	3
Stanhope	...	...	4
Thornley	...	...	2
			<hr/>
			9

These were all erected by private enterprise.

**HOUSING INSPECTION.****1. Inspection of Dwelling Houses during the year**

(1) (a)	Total number of dwelling houses inspected for housing defects (under Public Health or Housing Acts)	...	...	...	308
(b)	Number of inspections made for the purpose	...	...	...	346

(2)	Number of dwelling houses (included under sub-head (1) above) which were inspected and recorded under the Housing Consolidated Regulations, 1925 and 1932	...	...	308
(3)	Number of dwelling houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation	...	...	22
(4)	Number of dwelling houses (exclusive of those under the preceding sub-head) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation	...	...	26
2.	Remedy of defects during the year without service of formal notices.			
	Number of defective dwellings rendered fit in consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or their Officers	...	...	115
3.	Action under statutory powers during the year :—			
(a)	Proceedings under sections 9, 10 and 16 of the Housing Act, 1936 :—			
(1)	Number of dwelling houses in respect of which notices were served requiring repairs			4
(2)	Number of dwelling houses which were rendered fit after service of formal notices :—			
(a)	By owners	..	...	2
(b)	By Local Authority in default of owners			0
(b)	Proceedings under Public Health Acts :—			
(1)	Number of dwelling houses in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied	...	...	0
(2)	Number of dwelling houses in which defects were remedied after service of formal notices :—			
(a)	By owners	...	...	0
(b)	By Local Authority in default of owners			0
(c)	Proceedings under sections 11 and 13 of the Housing Act, 1936 :—			
(1)	Number of dwelling houses in respect of which Demolition Orders were made	..		1
(2)	Number of dwelling houses demolished in pursuance of Demolition Orders	...		0

(d) Proceedings under section 12 of the Housing Act, 1936 :—

(1)	Number of separate tenements or underground rooms in respect of which Closing Orders were made	...	...	0
(2)	Number of separate tenements or underground rooms in respect of which Closing Orders were determined, the tenement or room having been rendered fit	...	...	0

4. Housing Act 1936.—Part IV.—Overcrowding.

(a)	(1)	Number of Dwellings overcrowded at end of year	...	...	124
	(2)	Number of families dwelling therein	...	...	124
	(3)	Number of persons dwelling therein	...	...	623
(b)		Number of new cases of overcrowding reported during the year	...	...	0
(c)	(1)	Number of cases of overcrowding relieved during the year	...	...	0
	(2)	Number of persons concerned in such cases	...	...	0
(d)		Cases in which dwelling houses have again become overcrowded after the Local Authority have taken steps for the abatement of overcrowding	...	...	0
(e)		The somewhat high standard set by the Housing Act, 1936, as to what constitutes overcrowding, operates rather severely on a great many of the 2-roomed cottages in the dale, often isolated and situated on a breezy hillside, and where there is no aggregation of houses. In such cottages where there is a young family the dwelling now soon becomes technically overcrowded, although the occupants are quite healthy and contented.			

HOUSING (RURAL WORKERS) ACTS, 1926—38.

31 applications have been received for grants towards the improvement of dwelling houses under the above Acts of which 26 were approved. In 16 cases the houses have been completed and occupied by agricultural labourers or other persons in a similar economic position. The latter are as follows :—

Thornley	...	...	8
Wolsingham and District	...	...	5
St John's Chapel	...	...	1
Frosterley	...	...	1
Eastgate	...	...	1



## SECTION E.

### Inspection and Supervision of Food.

#### (a) MILK SUPPLIES.

From time to time I get complaints that churns for milk are being returned to farmers by the Dairy Companies in a dirty condition, and there has certainly, in the past, been adequate ground for such complaints. The Dairy Companies should remember that practically none of the farms possess a proper steam sterilising plant, and that it is a legal obligation on the part of the Companies to return the churns in a clean condition.

On July 20th, along with your Inspector, I examined a lorry load of milk churns at Wolsingham, just before they were going to be distributed to various farms, and I found a large number of them to be in a foul state. I called the attention of the Companies concerned to the matter.

A complaint came to me from a Dairy Company in March to the effect that a certain farm in the District was sending them dirty milk. On investigating the matter I had no difficulty in confirming the complaint, as the milk was obviously not being handled by clean methods, and I pointed out to the producer where the faults lay.

A similar complaint came to me in November about the milk from another farm, and the matter was carefully looked into. I was unable to satisfy myself as to whether the fault lay with the producer or with the Dairy Company. It is often exceedingly difficult in such cases to prove who is the guilty party—there may have been negligence on the part of either the producer or the Dairy Company, or the lorry driver may have been to blame for filling up half-full churns with milk from other producers. This latter habit has, undoubtedly, often been the cause of trouble.

On the whole, I am satisfied that the Dairy Companies are now taking greater pains to see that the churns are returned to the producers in a reasonably clean condition.

During the year 154 visits of inspection were made to byres and dairies, and 78 byres were improved by the provision of additional lighting, increased ventilation, concrete floors and repairs to roofs and windows.

Samples of milk from four farms were submitted for analysis and found to be satisfactory. Each of these applicants was granted a licence to sell "accredited milk" by the Durham County Council.



**(b) MEAT AND OTHER FOODS.**

The few private slaughter-houses in the area have been visited from time to time, and have always been found to be in a reasonably clean condition.

On July 7th I was called, with your Inspector, to inspect the carcase of a beast which had been killed at a slaughter-house in upper Weardale, and about which there was some suspicion. I was satisfied that there was nothing about the carcase to render it unfit for human consumption.

**(c) BAKEHOUSES.**

There is only one in the area, that of the local Co-operative Society, at Frosterley. I visited this on one occasion and found everything clean and in order.

**SECTION F.****Prevalence of, and control over,  
Infectious Diseases.****GENERAL (OTHER THAN TUBERCULOSIS).**

I received 123 notifications as follows :—

Disease.				Total cases notified.	Cases admitted to Hospital.	Deaths.
Scarlet fever	...	...	...	102	84	0
Diphtheria	...	...	...	10	10	0
Pneumonia	...	...	...	3	0	4
Puerperal pyrexia	...	...	...	3	0	0
Erysipelas	...	...	...	5	0	0
Total	...	...	...	123	94	4

The cases of scarlet fever were fairly well distributed through the area, but the incidence was greatest in the Stanhope neighbourhood, where there were 42 cases. In the Wolsingham area there were 24 cases ; in the Frosterley area 8 ; in Rookhope 10 ; in Derwent 6 ; in upper Weardale 12 cases. In the early part of the summer measles broke out in the Isolation Hospital, which was at the time full to capacity with scarlet cases, and for this reason I had to decline to admit some 10 cases of scarlet fever, which would in ordinary circumstances have been admitted. Six cases of scarlet fever were kept at home for the duration of the illness, where the remoteness of the house from other dwellings, and the fact that there were no other children in the house, made the removal to hospital hardly necessary.

Two cases notified as scarlet fever, in which there was considerable doubt as to the diagnosis, were kept at home with my approval. The occurrence of measles or other infectious disease in a small hospital such as ours, planned for the reception of scarlet fever and diphtheria cases only, is always an unpleasant and awkward complication. Fortunately all the children who contracted this double infection made a good recovery. One child admitted to hospital with scarlet fever, developed mastoid disease and was removed to Walkergate Hospital, Newcastle, for operation.

The 10 cases of diphtheria were all treated in hospital, three coming from Stanhope, one from Frosterley, and six (four in one house) from Wolsingham.

In the early part of the year I immunized against diphtheria 20 infants at the Welfare Centres in the area, completing the immunization scheme started in the latter part of 1937. Altogether 641 children were immunized, representing about 40 per cent. of the children in the District. Of the ten cases of diphtheria in 1938, two had received an immunizing injection just one year previously, and it was from them that the infection was conveyed to the four children in another house already referred to. The method employed in our scheme was the A.P.T. single shot, which is admittedly not the most certain method for getting anything like a complete degree of immunity. Any scheme involving more than a single injection would not, in my opinion, be practicable.

## HOSPITAL ACCOMMODATION.

This is probably fairly adequate for the area. On three occasions during the year, we had a rather serious outbreak of septic complications amongst the inmates of Ward III, which is used for scarlet fever cases, and I submitted to your Hospital Committee a special report on the subject. The flooring of this and the other scarlet ward is most unsatisfactory, through soft wood having been used in the construction; the boards are badly worn and splintered in places, and there are gaps between the boards. It is impossible to keep such a floor perfectly clean, and in its present condition it is a danger to the fingers of the nurses or maids who have to do the cleaning. I also referred to matters of re-decorating and re-plastering requiring attention. Acting on this report the committee have decided to have the floors relaid with suitable hard wood, and to have the other requirements attended to, and this will be a great improvement to the hospital.

Diphtheria antitoxin is always available for practitioners in the area.

Nothing has been done locally in regard to the employment of measles serum for prophylaxis or attenuation.

In May I was informed that a patient had been admitted to hospital at West Hartlepool suffering from typhoid fever, and who had recently been on a visit to Stanhope. It was thought that he



had possibly contracted the infection through eating polluted water-cress when at Stanhope. I found that he had not partaken of water-cress in his lodgings, nor in any other house in Stanhope. He may, of course, have picked and eaten water-cress when out for a walk, but in the few places in the neighbourhood where water-cress grows, there is not the slightest possibility of sewage contamination. Moreover, as there was not a single case of typhoid fever in this area during the year, I am inclined to think that the infection was contracted elsewhere.

In April, a child was, with my approval, removed from Wolsingham to Walkergate Hospital, Newcastle, with a tentative diagnosis of encephalitis lethargica, and died a few days after admission. Post-mortem investigation showed that the cause of death was tubercular meningitis.

## PREVENTION OF BLINDNESS.

No action under the Public Health Acts for prevention or treatment has been necessary.

## TUBERCULOSIS.

No action was necessary under the Public Health (Prevention of Tuberculosis) Regulations, 1925, nor under Section 172 of the Public Health Act, 1936.

I received 14 notifications of Tuberculosis—10 pulmonary and 4 non-pulmonary.

There were 8 deaths from Tuberculosis—6 pulmonary and 2 non-pulmonary, giving a tuberculosis death-rate of .88 per 1,000, population. The administrative control of this disease is under the County Council.

Age Periods.			New Cases.				Deaths.			
			Respiratory		Non-Respiratory		Respiratory		Non-Respiratory	
			M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
0	...	...								
1	...	...				1				1
5	...	...				2				
15	...	...		1						
25	...	...	3				1			
35	...	...								
45	...	...	2	2			1	2		
55	...	...	1		1				1	
65 and upwards				1			1	1		
Totals	...		6	4	1	3	3	3	1	1

At the close of the year the Tuberculosis Register was as follows :—

	Pulmonary	Non-Pulmonary
Male ...	53	47
Female ...	62	39
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	115	86
	<hr/>	<hr/>

All the deaths were previously notified cases.

### A.R.P. WORK.

A considerable amount of time was taken up in connection with this work which does not require to be mentioned in this Report.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

**JAS. BANNERMAN.**









